

A WORD FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR...

love living in Strafford. When we bought our home 12 years ago, we immediately recognized a true treasure—the people who live here.

Our town is rich in delightful characters. Locals remember the wonderful celebration last year of our 90+ year olds sponsored by the Strafford Historical Society. Each of these remarkable people is an inspiration. They are engaged in the community in a wide variety of affiliations: political, religious, historical (most recently restoring the Town House spire), musical, artistic, and other community festivities. They care about Strafford and everyone living here.

A few years ago, Steve Willbanks (currently an ex-officio member of our Board) brought to my attention, as Board Chair of the Friends, that Kay Campbell, one of our 90+ role models, was disappointed that the Morrill Homestead Orchard had fallen into disarray. For years, the Campbell family had tried to care for the Orchard with not much help from anyone else. Then, a giant storm had caused havoc, and the orchard upkeep became larger than one family could sustain.

I went to see Kay, and together we committed to transform the orchard at the Homestead into something of which we (and the town of Strafford) could be proud.

The Board of the Friends got behind this idea and funds from the Campbell family and board members got us off to a good start. As you’ve seen elsewhere in this issue, we now have big plans for the orchard. And we need to raise the necessary additional funding as soon as possible so that we can move forward.

The restored orchard will become a vital new feature to augment the Morrill Homestead’s historic gardens and will further increase visitation from horticultural enthusiasts. A supplementary interpretive sign will be displayed near the gateway to the orchard, explaining the orchard restoration, and a bench will be located at the top of Orchard Hill for folks to relax and enjoy the view of Strafford.

Along with our beloved citizens, the Justin Morrill Homestead is a true treasure. It is a lovely historic site -- a wonderful place to gather to enjoy events that reflect the goals and ambitions of our brilliant senator. A gift to the orchard restoration will ensure that the treasure that is ours benefits even more in the years to come.

Cameron Speth  
Chair, Friends of the Morrill Homestead

SESQUICENTENNIAL OF MORRILL'S FIRST TRIP TO EUROPE

May 20 of this year marks the 150th anniversary of Senator Justin Smith Morrill’s departure on his first trip to Europe. Representative Morrill had completed his work as chair of the House Ways and Means Committee and member of the Joint Committee on Reconstruction on March 3, 1867, when the 39th Congress adjourned. The next day, the 40th Congress convened, and newly minted Senator Morrill began his service. (Congress had set the quick turnaround by law because, during its struggle against President Andrew Johnson over reconstruction, it did not want the President to control when it might convene.) As a junior senator, Morrill had few duties, so when Congress began a planned lengthy recess at the end of March, he decided to take his long-desired trip to Europe. Since his wife didn’t feel well enough to go, Morrill invited his friend Rep. James G. Blaine (R-ME) to accompany him.

The two traveled for over three months in Europe. Embarking from New York, they landed first in Ireland, went on to England (where in London they were honored guests in Parliament), crossed the Channel to Calais on the way to Belgium, sailed up the Rhine River into Germany and Switzerland, crossed the Alps into northern Italy, went back through Switzerland into France and to Paris, crossed back to England, visited Scotland, and finally set sail back home, arriving about September 1.

Morrill’s letters home expressed his love of beautiful art, architecture, and gardens. He admired Kew Gardens and its rhododendrons, noting humorously that the latter “surpass my own at Strafford, and yet you remember one old lady came all the way from North Randolph to see mine!” He thought Strasbourg cathedral possibly the best in Europe, writing, “The exterior is not only grand, but every part is exquisitely beautiful,”

adding again with humor that its spire’s height of 474 feet was “more than three times higher than that of our old Strafford meeting-house!”

In Italy Morrill met several fellow art-loving Vermonters: George Perkins Marsh, an old friend who was U.S. minister plenipotentiary to Italy; sculptor Larkin Mead, who later created the Ethan Allen statue in National Statuary Hall; and sculptor Hiram Powers, whose son Preston Powers would complete his father’s contract to sculpt Vermont’s other statue in Statuary Hall, Jacob Collander.\* Morrill’s views of Europe’s art and architecture on this trip likely strongly influenced his approach to his duties when, in the 41st Congress, he began his eight-year service as chair of the Senate’s Public Building and Grounds Committee.

\*William Belmont Parker, *The Life and Public Services of Justin Smith Morrill* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1924), chap. VIII.

Roger Walke  
Board, Friends of the Morrill Homestead

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**Friends of the Morrill Homestead**  
*State -Owned Site and National Historic Landmark*

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Em truly yours,  
Justin S. Morrill.

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*The Justin Morrill Historic Site, one of eight State-Owned Historic Sites and National Historic Landmark, is maintained and operated by the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation, which encourages the discovery and appreciation of the state’s rich heritage through the stewardship and interpretation of the historic sites by evoking an authentic sense of time and place.*

*In partnership with the Division for Historic Preservation, the Friends of the Morrill Homestead fosters an awareness of the life and legacy of Sen. Justin Morrill with programs, events, and public outreach to enhance the visitor experience.*



[www.morrillhomestead.org](http://www.morrillhomestead.org)

The MORRILL HOMESTEAD  
*Chronicle*

News and Information from Vermont’s First National Historic Landmark and State-Owned Historic Site  
POST OFFICE BOX 98 • STRAFFORD, VERMONT • 05072  
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ORCHARD RESTORATION UPDATE

If you’re visiting the Morrill Homestead this springtime, take a stroll up into the orchard and see if you can find seven ancient apple trees; they are a living legacy of the trees planted during Morrill’s day.

Yet remarkably, The Friends of the Morrill Homestead, in partnership with the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation, are working to reproduce these same heirloom apples! We collected some of last year’s sprouts from each of these old trees and shipped this “scion wood” to Fedco Trees in Clinton, Maine for grafting onto new rootstocks. If these grafts are successful, then in spring of 2018 we’ll plant those young trees and begin a new generation of apples that are genetically identical to the seven arboreal relics of the late 19th century.

Grafting is just one fascinating aspect of the ongoing restoration of Morrill’s historic orchard; we’re also planting a number of the other original heirloom varieties that once grew here. In 2016 we planted 12 new trees from the varieties on Morrill’s original list: Esopus Spitzenburg, Seckel Pear, Tolman Sweet, Fameuse, Yellow Bellflower, Mother, and Ribston Pippin. And the restoration plan calls for 6 more heirloom apple trees to be planted in both 2017 and 2018. (This year’s trees include Northern Spy, King of Tompkins County, Golden Reinette, Rhode Island Greening, Lady, and Swaar.)

The restored orchard will provide generations of visitors to the Morrill Homestead with a living example of the region’s historic family farming practices. Our hope is that the orchard will increase visitation and tourism-based business in Strafford. In time, we will share our harvest of heirloom apples with a local food shelter and with local schools through Vermont’s Farm-to-School Network.

The orchard has already become a centerpiece for our calendar of programs, workshops, events, and exhibits in traditional farmstead activities, including our annual 19th Century Apple & Cheese Harvest Festival—a major event that in 2016 drew over 400 visitors of all ages and backgrounds from throughout the Northeast, and from as far as the UK and Japan. This year we are also presenting a related historical interpretive exhibit: “The Fruits of Time: Heirloom Apples Then and Now.”

Michael Caduto  
Director, Friends of the Morrill Homestead



Matthew Perry and John Dumville plant an heirloom apple tree in Morrill’s orchard last fall.

GREEN WILL GROW THE ORCHARD  
– WITH YOUR HELP

The kind of green that it takes to produce a harvest of heirloom fruit, doesn’t just grow on trees. In order to make possible this historic restoration of Morrill’s orchard, the Friends are covering the costs, including staff time, new trees, materials, and the services of our professional orchardist, Matthew Perry.

More than \$10,000 of our \$20,000 goal for this project has been raised, from the Campbell family, other members of the local community, the Friends’ board, the Vermont Community Foundation’s Sweetwater Hill Fund, and a grant from the Mascoma Savings Bank Foundation. We are now growing the Johnny Applesed Campaign—a major effort to raise another \$10,000, which will enable us to complete restoration of the Morrill Orchard to its historically accurate design, and to conduct a long-term sustainable management plan.

Please consider becoming one of our donors by using the postage paid envelope enclosed with this newsletter to make a tax-deductible contribution today. We invite you to become a partner in helping us to restore the harvest for generations to come.



# REPORT FROM THE STATE OF VERMONT

The 2016 season was one of great collaboration between the Friends of the Morrill Homestead and the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation (VDHP). Over the course of the year, we partnered on several successful events, providing a variety of activities during the Vermont Days-Annual Open House, the Gallery in the Garden/Minis for Morrill, and the Apple & Cheese Harvest Festival. It was terrific fun for the staff of VDHP to be more involved with special events and we hope that the visiting public benefited as well. We look forward to continuing this approach to programming in the years to come. A special thank you goes to the Friends for their unyielding dedication to these events.

The 2017 season promises to be another busy one. We are especially pleased to announce the opening of a new exhibit space in the woodshed addition of the Morrill house. Our first exhibit in the new gallery, entitled A Cultivated Mind in the County: The Gothic Revival Vision of Justin Smith Morrill, will introduce visitors to the precepts and proponents of Gothic Revival-style architecture in America, and will explore Justin Morrill's personal interpretation of the style at his beloved home in Strafford.

Two special programs have been planned in conjunction with the exhibit. The first, a presentation on Gothic Revival-style architecture by Middlebury College professor emeritus Glenn Andres, is being co-sponsored by the Strafford

Historical Society. The second, an architectural walking tour of Strafford Village, will be led by State Architectural Historian Devin Colman. For more information on these and other events and programs at our State Historic Sites, please visit [www.historicsites.vermont.gov](http://www.historicsites.vermont.gov).

One of the character-defining architectural features of Justin Morrill's remarkable home is the roofing material. The decorative pattern created by the embossed metal roofing shingles is a perfect complement to the Gothic Revival-style details of the house. Installed in 1888, the metal shingles replaced an earlier wood shake roof. After substantial analysis and consultation with specialists over the past year, we have identified a source for matching metal shingles and have determined an acceptable approach to the repair of a damaged section of the roof. We look forward to accomplishing this repair and restoration project during the 2017 season.

A variety of more modest projects, focusing primarily on the care of collections, are planned for the interior of the Morrill house this season. We will also be monitoring environmental conditions and developing a long-range plan for conservation and interpretation of the spectacular historic floor coverings that survive throughout the building.

Tracy Martin  
Historic Sites Section Chief  
Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

# HIDDEN TREASURES OF THE HOMESTEAD

(Note: This is the fourth in an occasional series about the "hidden treasures" at the Morrill Homestead.)

One of the highlights of a visit to the Morrill Homestead is Senator Morrill's library, with its wall of glass-fronted bookcases, its glorious stained glass window and the safe (disguised as a coat closet). The room is impressive, conveying as it does Morrill's perennial interest in learning and intellectual pursuits. But like the visible part of an iceberg, it only tells part of the story.

Although Morrill's formal education barely extended beyond grammar school, he was a lifelong learner. Biographer Coy Cross says that after leaving school, he read "...everything he could find," and continued acquiring books literally for the rest of his life. At his death in 1898 he left his collection of nearly 2,000 books to his son James; eventually they were inherited by Morrill's sister-in-law, Louise Swan, who had lived with the family for decades. In 1929 she bequeathed the books to the Morrill Memorial & Harris Library, which her will also funded. The books remain part of the town library's collection; the 1,100 or so volumes that

are not in the Senator's library at the homestead are today housed in the Education Center, some in plain sight in the bookcases in the first floor meeting room, the remainder upstairs.



Photo: Mary Louise Pierson

The books were catalogued at some point, presumably by the town librarian. A glance at the list of titles shows the stunning breadth of Morrill's interests: Charles Dickens, Sir Walter Scott and Nathaniel Hawthorne are represented by nearly a dozen titles each; there are over 200 volumes of biographies; history, poetry, religion, agriculture, industry, government, there is hardly a topic that is not represented. And of course there are the Victorian architecture and landscape design books, by A. J. Downing (with Morrill's handwritten notes), J. C. Loudon, John Ruskin, and Calvert Vaux.

Since the books are part of the Morrill Memorial & Harris Library collections, they are accessible to library patrons on request.

Chuck Ashton  
Board Vice Chair, Friends of the Morrill Homestead

# UPDATE: TRAVELS WITH FLAT JUSTIN

For those readers following the adventures of "Flat Justin," he sends his warm regards and would like to report that he accompanied a colleague from the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation on a holiday trip to China. Among the many highlights of his trip was this visit to the Giant Buddha of Lushan.



# GARDEN REPORT

It was just about two months ago. I was sitting inside, looking out at one of the coldest weekends of the winter, and thinking about – the Morrill Homestead gardens, of course!

At the time, however, it seemed absurd. Wind gusts were blowing snow all over the place. Once in a while the sun peeked through, but it wasn't enough to bring the negative temps above the zero level.

But Daylight Savings kicked in that very night; soon thereafter, the sun began to warm things up. So in retrospect, perhaps it wasn't premature to begin making plans for the Homestead's gardens in 2017.



It's certainly not premature now! Clean-up day, "Waking Up the Garden" will take place on Saturday, May 20 beginning at 9:00. Each year, a crew of gardeners gets the job done and makes for hearty conversation. (You know you meet the most interesting people in gardens.)

Master Gardener Martha Cain will once again be our onsite gardener. She has assembled a great working crew over the past couple of years, and their efforts have been impressive. The gardens, front and back, look fabulous!

The Master Gardener program at UVM Extension Service has been undergoing an internal reorganization in an effort to encourage more gardeners to take part in the program, and also to promote state projects that need their volunteer hours. As a Master Gardener (CT, 2000), I have become the contact person at the Homestead. We are now listed with both the Windsor County Chapter and the Central Vermont Chapter. I'm hoping these efforts will awaken an interest in our site for gardeners and visitors in general. After all, without Justin Morrill, where would we all be?

Please consult our website for programs in and about the gardens this summer - and come visit.

Margie Carpenter, Head Gardener

# CALENDAR PREVIEW: 2017

Justin Smith Morrill is best known as the father of the Land Grant College Acts of 1862 and 1890, which made higher education available to millions of people who would not otherwise have had that opportunity. Serving 43 years as a congressman (including during the Civil War), and as a senator through other tumultuous periods in our nation's history, Morrill demonstrated the fortitude befitting the son of a blacksmith. Through determination and hard work, he became a self-taught scholar renowned for his indomitable work ethic and political acumen.

Today, the rich variety of programs, events, and exhibits offered at the Justin Morrill State Historic Site is a bridge that links explorations of Morrill's past with present-day interests, especially those related to agriculture— one of the major areas of study at Land Grant Colleges.

As this issue went to press, two of our programs had already been held: the popular **Pruning and Grafting Fruit Trees** workshop with Mike Hebb (March 18 & 25, and April 9), and a new program, **Earth Gardens & the Seeds of Life: Planting a Traditional Family Garden**, with Michael Caduto (April 30). The remainder of this year's calendar offers something for every interest and age level. Full descriptions of our 2017 events may be found at: <http://www.morrillhomestead.org/news-events/2017-programs-events-exhibits/>

Next up, on May 20, will be **Wake Up the Garden: Reconstructing Morrill's Historic Landscape**.

The **Season Opening Weekend** for Guided Tours, Exhibits, Gardens, and the Fairy Village takes place on May 27.

Then on June 11, it will be **Open House at Morrill State Historic Site**, including free guided



tours, a historical musical performance by Linda Radtke and Arthur Zorn and



music for the generations with Jon Gailmor.

**Traditional Farmstead Skills**, a workshop with Andersen Thorp will be held on June 17.

**Drawing and Watercolor Camp** for ages 6-12 will take place June 19-23.



**Gallery in the Garden** kicks off this year on June 30, with an art show reception regaled by the ethereal music of Sam Moffatt on hammered dulcimer...

the annual Silent Auction of "Minis for Morrill"... and guided tours of Art of the Morrill Homestead.



The 2017 Art Show, "The Land and People" will run from June 30 through July 16.



The schedule continues with **Preschool Nature Camp** for ages 3-5 (July 10-14).

Our **Fairy House Festival** featuring author Tracy Kane (July 22).

A new exhibit,

**The Fruits of Time– Heirloom Apples, Then and Now** which will run from July 26 through October 15.

August events will include **The Art of Growing Food**, with author Ellen Ecker Ogden on the 6th.

A **Watercolor Painting Workshop** with Jennifer Brown on the 12th. Jennifer will be back the following month for her Continuing Watercolor Painting Workshop on September 7, 14, 21, and 28.

Our director, Michael Caduto, will deliver his popular **Fiddleheads, Lamb's Quarters, Nettles & Nuts—Wild Edible, Medicinal, and Poisonous Plants** on September 10.

To close out the season, our annual **19th Century Apple and Cheese Harvest Festival (& Apple Pie Contest!)**, which has been designated a "Top Ten 2017 Fall Event" by the Vermont Chamber of Commerce will be held September 24.



# HOMESTEAD FEATURED IN STATEWIDE SCHOOL COMPETITION

At Hartford High School in White River Junction a group of seven students and three teachers recently took part in the third annual Town History in 3D Competition in Randolph, Vermont. This statewide competition involves students intrigued by the history of Vermont and the value of using technology to create accurate representations of structures that stand, or once stood, throughout the state. This year the Hartford team chose the Morrill Homestead as the focus of the group's research. It was the students' second go at competing with models and videos representing the history of the Homestead. 3D students are all responsible for knowing the significance of the buildings during its time and why it had importance. Each team makes two models. One for a large map of Vermont, as well as one for the judges at their personal tables.



In preparation for the event, HHS students visited the Homestead this past October for private tours with Tracy Martin, Historic Sites Section Chief, and Andersen Thorp, HHS Art Teacher and FMH board member. This was a great opportunity for the modelers to take photos and measurements of the structures for accuracy. It also presented the researchers an opportunity to ask questions and tour



Hartford High School's 3D Vermont Computer Technology Team, students and staff with an interpretation of Sen. Morrill's library, designed for their 3D Homestead models, along with an informative historical video and computer generated 3D data.

Under Anderson Thorp's guidance Hartford High School received this winter a Public Place Award, co-sponsored by the Vermont Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects, the Vermont Community and Urban Forestry Council, and the Vermont Planners Association.

the buildings and grounds.

HHS students spent time on creating the model each week for the past five months. While this was the main focus, other students took the time to plan the layout of their video and figure out extra historical facts about the Homestead. Although the students didn't win the competition this year, we're confident they impressed the judges with their extra knowledge of the Morrill Homestead and their detailed models (which will be on display at the Homestead throughout the 2017 season).